

Simeon Folsom House,
Exeter, New Hampshire.
Rockingham Co.

HABS No. NH-8

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Written Historical and Descriptive Data
District No. NH

Historic American Buildings Survey
Professor Eric T. Huddleston, District Officer
University of New Hampshire

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and
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

SIMEON FOLSOM HOUSE STORES AND DWELLING
EXETER ROCKINGHAM CO. NEW HAMPSHIRE

<u>Owners</u>	Mary McCowan, Dover, N. H. Timothy Shinnick, 19 Garfield St., Exeter, N. H.
<u>Date of Erection</u>	1816 and 1830
<u>Architect</u>	Unknown
<u>Builder</u>	Unknown
<u>Present Condition</u>	1816 Building - Floors weak, brick painted, sash new, large door 1st floor recent. 1816 Kitchen Ell - This portion is not in original form. 1830 Building - Construction generally good, exterior brick and granite painted, sash new.
<u>Number of Stories</u>	Three
<u>Materials of Construction</u>	Floors wood. Walls 1813 brick. 1816 granite 1st story front, re- mainder brick. Roof wood. Interior trim new, all fireplaces closed.
<u>Other Existing Records</u>	"Descendants of the First John Folsom", New England Historical and Genealog- ical Society Report, April, 1876. "Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire" by Elwin L. Page "History of Exeter" by Charles H. Bell, 1888. Records at Registry of Deeds at Exeter, N. H.

SIMEON FOLSOM HOUSE
EXETER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Descriptive Data

Simeon Folsom who built the 1816 Brick Store was born in Newmarket June 19, 1766. He was the sixth generation from the original John (Simeon⁶, Simeon⁵, Col. Jeremiah⁴, Jeremiah³, John², John¹) who came to Exeter between 1650 and 1660. The episode of Simeon's early years gave promise of an interesting career suddenly cut short.

"He came to Exeter at the age of 18 and let himself to perform in a year's time a stipulated amount of nail making for a stipulated sum of money and board; then having done the work in half the time, spent the other six months in getting what education he could at the Academy. Thence he set up nail making for himself. He married Mary, daughter of Capt. James Leavitt of Exeter, in 1800, opened a store for general trade, took an active part in politics, was elected senator to State Legislature 1813, made master of Masonic Lodge, chosen delegate to a convention at Portsmouth for sustaining Madison's Measures in the war crisis, and died suddenly when on a business trip at Wolfboro Aug. 22, 1816, and in the midst of a career becoming more and more distinguished."

Descendants of the first John Folsom - reprint from N.E.
Historical and Genealogical Reports, April 1876.

The deed Mary to Isaac and Abraham (See P. 10) indicates he died 1814, age 48 years.

Simeon and Mary lived on the hemlock side just across the Great Bridge near the Brick Store (called Building No. 1 on the plan). The house was on land that he purchased of Joseph Eldridge in 1799 just before his marriage. He accumulated other property on both sides of Prison Lane, and the map of 1802 shows his nail factory. We can assume that about 1813 he started to build the Brick Store. It seems that he had the walls up and the roof on when he made the fateful trip to Wolfboro. The next we know of it Mary Folsom, Administrator for Simeon's estate, submits in 1817 a "Bill of Expense to Finishing Brick Store". This includes boards, plank, plaster, glass, the finishing of two hearths, hardware, labor, etc. No mention of shingles or brick.

The date inscribed on the marble oval is 1816. This must have been about the date of its completion and from the careless spacing of the inscription it is easy to think that the marble had been laid up with the walls, and the inscription cut later, the carver working from a ladder or inadequate staging.

Perhaps this carelessness wouldn't have pleased Simeon, nor would the crudity of the cornice crown mouldings, though this last may be the result of repair. There are other changes on the front: sash and doors have been replaced, and a square headed door has swallowed up an original door and window; the brick has been painted.

The cornice is a free adaptation of an Asher Benjamin model nicely suited to the scale of the building built on a curve.

We must use our imagination to see the building as it was, and we might also exercise it to see Simeon standing before it. The New England Historical and Genealogical Society printed a report in 1876 which indicates his physical appearance.

"His Sunday suit was a snuff colored dress coat with covered cloth buttons, light faun colored small clothes and white top boots, light vest, ruffled shirt, standing collar, white cravat, square gold watch key with black ribbon, hair worn in a queue and combed back from his forehead. A stature full six feet, well proportioned, light blue eyes, dark hair, pale complexion, small white teeth and manly address."

The building is beautiful even now as you approach it from the bridge with the sun playing at an angle across its slightly curved face. It must have been very beautiful then with Simeon standing before it in his Sunday clothes.

We think that the store was one room with two front doors, windows and fireplace. In the basement is a fireplace, also. How Simeon meant to use this space is a mystery. Apparently no one else knew, for it shows no sign of ever having had a fire.

The second floor was entered from the high land and the rooms were quite clearly parlor and dining room. Over these are two bedrooms.

Back of the part described there must have been another portion for stairs and kitchen.

The present kitchen part marked #3 on the plan seems to be later, for it is built on the wall of part #2 and in general presents a careless appearance. The attic is closed off and hides the story that its frame might tell.

The fireplaces of the house are bricked up and the trim replaced. Little now remains but the general disposition of rooms, doors and windows.

Until about 1830 Mary continued to live in the old house which Simeon bought the year before their marriage. At this time she is described "Mary Folsom Widow of Somersworth".

The house, nail factory and land west of the Brick Store are sold to her sons Isaac and Abraham "for the consideration of thirty dollars per year during the natural life of Mary Folsom".

The old order changes, house and nail factory disappear. By the side of the old "Brick Store" a brand new "Brick Block" with cut granite first story and big store windows takes its place. The old building, like Simeon on Sunday, has a spritely charm. The new building, like the great American whose visit makes it a shrine, has solemn dignity. It is well proportioned and has the feeling of strength. The sash of all storys have been changed. Brick is painted and some of the granite, too. The plan is direct and self-explanatory. The interior trim has been replaced.

The building was erected, we judge, in 1830. Mary Folsom's deed to her sons recorded May, 1830 mentions dwelling and shop now standing. And Abraham's deed to Isaac recorded in December the same year gives his right, title and interest in land and three story brick building standing thereon. The dwelling in Mary's deed seems to be the house where she and Simeon lived and the shop is the nail factory.

In 1860 Mrs. S. B. Clarke occupied the dwelling in this building, and Robert Lincoln, son of Abraham and a student at the Academy, roomed there.

According to Elwin L. Page in his "Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire", Lincoln's desire and hope to visit his son was realized by an invitation to speak at Cooper Union and in the unfolding of events the New England tour played a large part in his subsequent election. Lincoln spent several days in Exeter and had dinner with his son in the front room at the extreme left.

"During his days in Exeter Lincoln was seen much in Robert's company.....The father entered with real zest into the boy's interests and his companionships with the other students. This was the prime object of his trip into New England and in spite of political calls he accomplished it." Elwin L. Page, page 112.

The building was thirty years old when Lincoln visited his son here. But even as Simeon's Brick Store seemed appropriate for him, so this building seems a fitting background for Abraham Lincoln.

Reviewed by H.C.F. 1936.

ADDENDA I

In a deed of 1803 Simeon Folsom is mentioned as nail-cutter. "The old method of manufacturing wrot nails was by shaping and heading each one separately by hand without the aid of machinery. This was a slow and laborious process and very expensive." The new method of cutting and slitting iron into nail rods by machinery had been invented about the time of the Revolution and in 1785 Col. Hobert had opened at King's Falls the first furnace and slitting mill in Exeter. Bell's History of Exeter, p. 329.

ADDENDA II

Owners of both buildings claim that Robert Lincoln lived on their side.

On page 97 Mr. Page in his "Lincoln in New Hampshire" says, "He (Lincoln) might still find the brick house then occupied by Mrs. S. B. Clarke where Robert Lincoln and George Latham roomed in 1860." He would note again the queer angled corners of the rooms but he would hardly know how to account for the automobile now housed in the ground floor." It is evident that Mr. Page locates Robert Lincoln in the 1816 Brick Building.

It is common tradition about Exeter that Robert Lincoln lived in the 1830 Brick Block. Both owners agree that he boarded with Mrs. S. B. Clarke. The first city directory we have found is some ten years later. It makes no mention of Mrs. Clarke. We have accepted the local tradition.

ADDENDA III

History of Ownership

1799 Oct. 31 Joseph Eldridge land with house and small
out-houses and half a well of water to
Simeon Folsom. Book 153, p. 110.

1816 Oct. 21 Inventory of estate of Simeon Folsom #9381

Brick Block (1830)

1817 May 10 Dwelling house
to Mary Folsom as dower #9381

1830 May 31 Mary Folsom to
Isaac and Abraham, Book 260,
p. 330.

1830 Dec. 4 Abraham to Isaac
his part with Brick Block,
Book 262, p. 104.

Isaac to Charles E. Folsom?

1889 Charles E. Folsom to
Mary McGowan present owner.
Book 448, p. 272.

Brick Store (1816)

Mary Folsom has bought Brick
Store. See Mary Folsom to
Isaac and Abraham. Book
260, p. 330.

1817 March 6 Expense to
Finishing Brick Store #9381.

1860 Abraham Folsom adminis-
trator of estate of Mary
Folsom to Charles E. Folsom.
Bk. 388, p. 257.

1868 Chas. E. Folsom to
Melinda Carroll, Bk. 419, p. 469.

1872 Melinda Carroll to Mary
J. Emerson. Bk. 434, p. 163.

1889 Mary J. Emerson to John
Ford. Book 517, p. 383.

1916 John Ford to Julia
Shinnick his daughter. Then
to Timothy Shinnick, Julia's
husband, present owner.

ADDENDA IV

Portion of Deed by Mary to her Sons

Mary Folsom of Somersworth widow to Isaac and Abraham (Folsom) a certain parcel of land bounded easterly by the Brick Store which I purchased of the estate of my deceased husband Simeon Folsom.

Northerly by land of Timothy Gridley

Westerly by land of Kingsley Hall

Southerly by road leading from Exeter Bridge to the goal and formerly known by the name of Frison Lane.

With dwelling and shop standing thereon containing $\frac{1}{2}$ acre of land more or less and is the same land conveyed to said Simeon Folsom by a deed from Joseph Eldridge, dated Oct. 31, 1799, and another deed from Daniel Clark, dated Jan. 2, 1801, and the same that was occupied by said Simeon Folsom from the time he purchased the same until A.D. 1814 and which has since been occupied by me and my tenants under me. Reserving always the privilege of passing over the back side of said land so as to have admittance to the back door of my Brick Store (so called) meaning thereby to reserve the right of going to and from said back door to the street over said land. Also reserving a privilege to the necessary. Also a passage way to the front so as to give admittance to the chambers of my Brick Store so called which is occupied as a house.

For the consideration of \$30.00 per year during the natural life of Mary Folsom.

Dated March 10, 1830

Recorded May 31, 1830 Bk. 260, p.330.

ADDENDA V

Portion of Deed by Abraham to Isaac

A parcel of land in Exeter bounded

Easterly by the Brick Store belonging to Mary Folsom

Northerly by land of Timothy Gridley

Westerly by land of Kingsley Hall

Southerly by road leading from Great Bridge

to the jail together with all my right title and interest
in and to the three story Brick Building standing thereon
containing one-half acre more or less.

Dec. 4, 1830 Book 262, page 104.

ADDENDA VI

To Expense in Finishing the Brick Store #9381

The best of wide and clear boards 2192 feet	\$43.86
To 3291 feet pine and hemlock boards and plank	32.91
Nails, locks, butts, thumb latches, screws and bolts	30.49
Paid for pound by job and agreement	1.92
Paid Daniel Rundlett for laying two hearths	1.00
Paid for lime to paint the cellar	.42
Paid Joseph J. Hoitt's bill	6.40
Paid Jonathan York's bill	4.37
Paid Geo. W. Folsom's bill	1.25
Paid Thomas Proctor's bill for work and stock	21.07
Paid Theo B. Moses for glass	21.96
Paid John F. Odlin bill for work	11.00
Paid Daniel Rundlett bill for what is now plastered	12.00
Paid James Folsom's bill for work with some stock	69.78
Paid Josiah Folsom 3rd bill for work	13.00
Paid for cutting glass, nails, timber, board plank	<u>.99</u>
	\$272.92
Thomas Folsom time to transact the above business	
for the W.I. Mary Folsom	<u>20.00</u>
	\$292.92

Received payment,

Thomas Folsom

ADDENDA VI (CONTINUED)

Annas Proctor	\$17.14
Daniel Rundlett's bill	73.
Thomas Leavitt	5.34
John Odlin	9.09
George Smith	5.34
N. & C. W. Gilman	5.
Josiah Rundlett	10.50
Daniel Clark	? .88
Theodore Moses	19.00
Kingsley Hall, Jr.	50.00
Thomas Folsom	9.24
Samuel Praner for liquor	8.
Gilman Smith for liquor	2.
Scattering Day Attending	<u>15.27</u>
	\$526.72

On outside of bill:

Exeter, March 6th, 1817

Received of Mary Folsom Adm. \$136⁴⁶/₁₀₀

part of the bill

Thomas Folsom

Eugene W. Clark

Assistant Supervisor

Approved

E. J. Huddleston

District Officer

July 12, 1935